



**NEW ENGLAND
COMMON ASSESSMENT PROGRAM**

**Released Items
2008**

**Grade 8
Writing**

Writing

- ❶ What is the correct form of the underlined word in the sentence below?

Last year, the whale swims back and forth in the channel.

- A. swim
- B. swam
- C. swimming
- D. swum

- ❷ Which word in the sentence below should be capitalized?

According to scientists from NASA, the planet most likely to be the home of some new form of life is mars.

- A. scientists
- B. planet
- C. home
- D. mars

- ❸ What is the **best** way to combine the two sentences below?

Some icebergs are called “growlers.” They make a noise as they melt.

- A. As some icebergs melt they are called “growlers” and make a noise.
- B. Since some icebergs are called “growlers” they make a noise when they melt.
- C. Some icebergs are called “growlers” because they make a noise as they melt.
- D. Some icebergs are called “growlers,” make a noise, and melt.

- ❹ How should the underlined word in the sentence below be spelled?

Diamonds wouldn't be valueable if they were easy to find.

- A. valuable
- B. valuible
- C. valuabel
- D. valueble

- 5 Where should a semicolon (;) be placed in the sentence below?

Truffles are mushrooms that are very expensive true food lovers pay almost anything to add them to soups and sauces.

- A. after *mushrooms*
- B. after *expensive*
- C. after *pay*
- D. after *anything*

- 6 Which word in the sentence below should be capitalized?

In geography, I learned that the Mississippi river flows south to the ocean.

- A. geography
- B. river
- C. south
- D. ocean

- 7 Which edit is needed in the sentence below?

I asked the principle of my school if there was a possibility I could wait until tomorrow.

- A. Change *principle* to **principal**.
- B. Change *possibility* to **possability**.
- C. Change *wait* to **weight**.
- D. Change *tomorrow* to **tommorrow**.

- 8 Which of the following is a run-on sentence?

- A. Hundreds of old steam engines have been restored and now operate at railroad museums.
- B. During the 1900s, however, many new forms of transportation were invented and became popular.
- C. Because the population of the United States grew dramatically, people settled in many new areas.
- D. The 1800s were called the Age of Steam most people in the United States traveled on steam railroads.

- 9 What is the **best** way to combine the two sentences below?

The search was difficult. Several factors made it difficult.

- A. The search was difficult and several factors made it difficult.
- B. With several factors, the search was difficult.
- C. Several factors made the search difficult.
- D. The search was difficult, several factors made it difficult.

- 10 Which edit is needed in the sentence below?

The gorilla's lives became much happier when the zoo's officials created an area with thousands of plants from their native environment.

- A. Change *gorilla's* to *gorillas'*.
- B. Change *zoo's* to *zoos*.
- C. Change *officials* to *official's*.
- D. Change *thousands* to *thousands'*.

When writing responses to prompts 11, 12, and 13, remember to

- **read the prompt carefully,**
- **develop a complete response to the prompt,**
- **proofread and edit your writing, and**
- **write only in the space provided.**

This passage is taken from a story about a boy named Willy and his dog Searchlight. Willy's grandfather is sick and can no longer talk. Read the passage and think about the relationship between Willy and his grandfather. Then write a response to the prompt that follows.

Little Willy

John Reynolds Gardiner

That evening little Willy made a discovery.

He was sitting at the foot of Grandfather's bed playing the harmonica. He wasn't as good as Grandfather by a long shot, and whenever he missed a note Searchlight would put her head back and howl.

Once, when little Willy was way off key, Searchlight actually grabbed the harmonica in her mouth and ran out of the room with it.

"Do you want me to play some more?" little Willy asked Grandfather, knowing very well that Grandfather would not answer. Grandfather had not talked—not one word—for over three weeks.

But something happened that was almost like talking.

Grandfather put his hand down on the bed with his palm facing upward. Little Willy looked at the hand for a long time and then asked, in a whisper, "Does that mean 'yes'?"

Grandfather closed his hand slowly, and then opened it again.

Little Willy rushed to the side of the bed. His eyes were wild with excitement. "What's the sign for 'no'?"

Grandfather turned his hand over and laid it flat on the bed. Palm down meant "no." Palm up meant "yes."

Before the night was over they had worked out other signals in their hand-and-finger code. One finger meant "I'm hungry." Two fingers meant "water." But most of the time little Willy just asked questions that Grandfather could answer either "yes" or "no."

And Searchlight seemed to know what was going on, for she would lick Grandfather's hand every time he made a sign.

- 11 Write a paragraph that explains the relationship between Willy and his grandfather. Include details from the passage to support your response.

Read this passage and think about how you will continue it. Then write a response to the prompt below.

Can I Talk to You?

My best friend and I always seem to be arguing about something. What happened last weekend is a perfect example.

“Listen, can I talk to you?” I asked.

- 12 Continue this story, using dialogue to develop the plot/story line.

For a class report, a student wrote this fact sheet about lightning. Read the fact sheet and then write a response to the prompt that follows.

Lightning

Facts about lightning

- thunder is made from the sound waves produced by lightning
- lightning causes air to heat rapidly and then cool, producing sound waves
- lightning happens mostly within clouds, but it can also happen between a cloud and Earth
- causes more than 10,000 forest fires in the United States each year
- Earth is struck by lightning 50 to 100 times each second worldwide
- can strike up to 20 miles away from a storm
- temperature of a lightning bolt hotter than the Sun
- about 100,000 thunderstorms in the United States each year
- chances of being struck by lightning 1 in 600,000
- average flash of lightning could turn on a 100-watt bulb for three months
- can strike more than once in the same place
- “blitz” is the German word for lightning
- moves 60,000 miles a second
- kills or injures several hundred people in the United States each year

- 13 Use the fact sheet to write an **introductory paragraph** for a report about the dangers of lightning. Your paragraph should

- contain a lead sentence/hook that will interest the reader in the report,
- set the context for the report, and
- include a clear focus/controlling idea.

Select only the facts you need for your **introduction**.

Do you think that making your school lunch period longer is a good idea? Write to your principal to persuade him or her to agree with your point of view.

Use the questions in the box below to organize your writing. You can answer the questions **before** you write to plan your response or **after** you write to check your response. What you write will be included as part of your score.

14 What is the focus/opinion of your writing? _____

15 What are the reasons/arguments in your writing? _____

16 What is the conclusion to your writing? _____

When writing a response to prompt 17, remember to

- **read the prompt carefully,**
- **develop a complete response to the prompt,**
- **proofread and edit your writing, and**
- **write only in the space provided.**

- 17** Do you think that making your school lunch period longer is a good idea? Write to your principal to persuade him or her to agree with your point of view.

Acknowledgments

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Grade 8 Writing Released Item Information

Released Item Number	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
Content Strand ¹	SC	SC	SC	SC	SC	SC	SC	SC	SC	SC	LR	NW	RW	PW	PW	PW	PW
GLE Code	7-9	7-9	7-1	7-9	7-9	7-9	7-9	7-9	7-1	7-9	7-3	7-5	7-6	7-7	7-7	7-7	7-7
Depth of Knowledge Code	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	2	2	2	3	3	3	3
Item Type ²	MC	MC	MC	MC	MC	MC	MC	MC	MC	MC	CR	CR	CR	SA	SA	SA	ER
Answer Key	B	D	C	A	B	B	A	D	C	A							
Total Possible Points	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	4	4	4	1	1	1	12

¹Content Strand: SC = Structures of Language & Writing Conventions. Short Responses — LR = Response to Literary Text, NW = Narrative Writing, RW = Report Writing. Extended Response — PW = Persuasive Writing

²Item Type: MC = Multiple Choice, CR = Constructed Response, SA = Short Answer, ER = Writing Prompt